AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

- In the specification, please replace the paragraph beginning at Page 5, line 27 with the following amended paragraph:

-- Referring to FIGS. 1-3, during the lancing of the test subject's skin S, the open end 36 of the outer end cap 30 is placed on an area of the test subject's skin (*e.g.*, a forearm or finger). The plunger 14 is depressed to advance the lancet 18 from a retracted position (FIG. 2), wherein the lancet 18 is completely contained within the end caps 30, 32, to a lancing position (FIG. 3), wherein the lancet 18 extends through the open ends 36, [[28]] 38 of the end caps 30, 32 and into the test subject's skin S. Movement of the plunger 14 by the user triggers a drive spring within the lancing mechanism 16 that advances the lancet 18 into a test subject's skin S. A rebound spring within the lancing mechanism 16 then retracts the tip 40 of the lancet 18 from the test subject's skin S. --

- In the specification, please replace the paragraph beginning at Page 6, line 5 with the following amended paragraph:

-- According to one embodiment of the present invention, the lancing device 10 is vacuum-assisted to facilitate the production of a blood sample at the puncture site on the test subject's skin. In such an embodiment, the outer end cap 30 forms a substantially airtight seal with the forward end 34 of the device 10. The placement of the open end 36 of the outer end cap 30 against a test subject's skin S, aided by pressing against the skin, forms the substantially airtight seal. The lancing device 10 includes a vacuum member 44 such as a diaphragm or bellows that displaces air within the lancing device 10 and the end cap 30. Release of the plunger 14 by the user triggers the vacuum member [[30]] 44, which evacuates air from the inner and outer end caps [[14]] 32, [[18]] 30. --

- In the specification, please replace the paragraph beginning at Page 6, line 15 with the following amended paragraph:

-- When the vacuum member 44 is activated, the test subject's skin S is drawn inside the outer end cap [[14]] 30 to the inner-locating end cap 32 as is depicted in FIG. 3. As the created vacuum pulls the test subject's skin S into the device 10, the test subject's skin S bulges around the locating end cap 32. The test subject's skin S is stretched flat across the open end 38 of the

inner end cap 32. This stretched, flat skin facilitates sample formation and collection. The vacuum holds the skin and puncture sight in a fixed position while the sample harvesting occurs.

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